Never let the surface of the ground crust over.

—

Pure water for the cow if you want pure milk from the cow.

—

Look for lice on the little chickens which do not seem to be thriving.

—

Sour milk is good for the little chicks. Good for the laying hens also.

—

Spray the currant and gooseberry bushes with white helebore to kill the worms.

—

Feed the lambs a mixture of oats, wheat bran and oil meal if you want them to make specially rapid growth.

—

Sow some rape for the pigs. It can be drilled in or broadcasted. It will be ready for pasturing in about five weeks.

—

If weeds gets up before the corn run a weeder through the field. It will knock the weeds out and will bring up the corn faster.

—

The farmer who tests his seed corn is the farmer who is saved the disappointment of planting a whole field and not having any of it come up.

—

It is the pig that grows right from the start which proves the most profitable animal to raise. See that conditions are right to produce the best results.

—

Too much stock on the pasture is a mistake. It provides insufficient food for the stock and causes them to graze it down so close as to permanently injure it.

—

It takes generous feeding to build up the muscle cells broken down by the hard work of the busy season. You cannot do this by feeding corn to your horses. Feed oats.

—

A bull's a bull to some farmers, no matter of what breed, or color, or disposition. But never was greater mistake made by a farmer than this. The bull is more than half of the herd.

—

The farmer who puts off securing his seed corn until the last thing and then plants anything he can get ready quickly deserves no sympathy when his cornfields prove a disappointment.

—

There is such a thing as false economy in feeding. If a third more expense in feeding gives you three times the profit, you can easily figure out the wisdom of generous rations. Feed wisely, but not niggardly.

—

On the first rainy day now get the haying tools in shape. Haying will be upon us almost before we realize it. This promises to be a good haying year. Prices may be lower, but the larger crops will bring the profits up to fully what they were last year.

—

Wet wood is an aggravation, and there is a temptation to use coal oil to hurry matters. But don't do it. Many a person has tried it and been injured or fatally burned. But why wet wood at all? Why not have the wood supply under shelter and so far ahead that it will have good time to season.

—

Encysted worms in sheep cannot be reached by drugs. Treatment must be preventive. The mature worms must be expelled from the bowels by the administration of a vermifuge, surface waters must be avoided and pastures known to be infected should be pastured by other stock for a year or two.

—

Theory and then practice. Put some of the new ideas you have gained from reading during the winter and from the discussions at the farmers' institutes you attended to work for you. There is chance for improvement in the methods on almost every farm. There is an easier or better way of doing things than has been in practice. Get next to the new ways, save all the labor you can without danger of jeopardizing the crop.

—

A good scoop can be made out of a quart or two quart tin vegetable can by melting or cutting off the top and beginning at this open end, slitting back to within an inch of the bottom. On the opposite side of the can make a similar slit and then cut out the tin between these two slits on one side. Round off the corners at the open end. Take a piece of broom handle and drive a nail through the bottom of the center of the can and into the center of the broom handle and there you are. The scoop is complete. Perhaps not quite as strong as a boughten one but very serviceable.

—

Systematic rotation of crops will prove most effective in overcoming all corn pests, especially root pests such as the root louse and the different corn root worms. The corn plant is the one upon which they thrive best and if it is removed from the ground for a year or two, it will effectively exterminate them. If you have a corn plat that was infested with any of these insects, you had better sow to millet or cowpeas this year than to attempt another crop of corn and expect it to be free from pests. The failure of the Illinois station with oil of lemon on seed corn as a protector from the corn root louse shows that little is to be expected from applying fluids to the seed. So long as the weather is dry and ideal for the growth of the plant, there was little trouble and the application seemed to be effective; but when the weather was extremely wet—the ideal weather for this pest—the oil of lemon was abt effective.

CHAPTER VI.

When we met at breakfast the next morning there were no signs of the breach between Vincent and myself except his unusual pallor, which suggested to me that he, too, had spent a sleepless night.

The girls were inclined to joke our solemn faces, but so long as the meal passed off without disclosing that something was amiss between us I did not care. All day we saw nothing of each other, but this was not unusual, as we always pursued different courses. I spent most of my time with Agatha Fourth, the only honorable, whom I found to be a really delightful girl and certainly the possessor of remarkable musical talent.

In the evening the others went out to row on the lake and left Agatha Fourth alone with me. She sat at the piano and played everything she could think of, while I lay on a broad divan where I could watch her and listen to the soft music.

I suppose that my bad night had something to do with the fact that I was boor enough to fall asleep while the beautiful Agatha Fourth was playing for me. Certainly I know that I was guilty of that appalling rudeness for I was suddenly brought to a state of consciousness by the sound of a clock striking. I counted the strokes mechanically—there were 12. I must have slept for hours, and, sure enough, the room was dark except for the firelight, and my slighted hostess was gone from the piano stool. As I was about to rise I heard voices, and, turning, I saw on the other side of the piano a man and a girl. The man was Vincent, of course, and I thought, as I looked at him sitting full in the bright firelight, that he had never looked so handsome. His evening dress showed off his superb athletic form to the best advantage, and his face was fresh and strong, with the bronze of his tan extending to the roots of his hair, which was cut close to conceal a wave in the gold of it. It occurred to me at once that his face had lost much of its boyishness and he looked every inch a man. But it took me some time to realize that the girl who sat with him was none other than the secretary.

At first I could not tell what it was that had so changed her, whether it was her shimmering white evening gown, or the glamour of [illegible] at last it came to me that it was nothing more nor less than the glory of her hair that had wrought the transformation. I had never seen the secretary with her hair done any way but plainly and unbecomingly, but now it was dressed as I knew it should have been dressed long ago. She wore it low on her long, slender neck, rolled at the sides and rippling loosely back from her forehead, in shining waves and little willful rings held in place with big shell combs.

And when at last it dawned upon me that it was really the secretary who was Vincent's companion, so breathless was I with amaze that at first I hardly realized that I could hear perfectly what they were saying. And when I did realize it, I wanted to rise and let them know that I was there, but on second thought I saw that I must have been there for so long that they would never believe that I had not heard the whole of their conversation. Furthermore, it occurred to me that it might be well if I stayed to hear what Miss Marsh had to say for herself.

"And so I calmly took the dress and put it on, just to amuse myself," I heard the secretary saying, "and did my hair the way the others do theirs, you know. And it was so late I thought no one would find me here."

"And if I hadn't left my pipe on the table no one would have found you, and I—think what I should have missed!" Vincent's voice was eloquent.

"Of course, it was very vain of me, very vain," she went on; "but you know when a girl has to earn her own living she gets a little tired of all work and no play, and sometimes the impulse to pretend she's fortunate and happy and—and pretty"—the secretary flushed under Vincent's gaze as she faltered the last word, and hurried on—"and like the others—is so strong that it tempts her to deck herself out in borrowed plumes and sit in an empty drawing room at 12 o'clock at night enjoying the illusion for a brief hour."

"No," said Vincent, softly, "I don't think it was vain; I think it was the most natural thing in the world, and—and I'm glad you did it," he ended rather lamely.

The secretary laughed, and I wondered what there was about the sound that made Vincent rave over it. Then, as his eyes wandered to her hair, he sighed.

"Why sighest thou, oh, furnace?" she smiled at him.

"I was just thinking about something."

"About what?"

"You don't want to hear?"

"Ah! But I do!"

"All right, then." He turned on her swiftly. "I was just looking," he said, "at your hair. I'll bet the angels have halos like that."

The secretary blushed. "It's horrid hair," she said, giving it a vindictive little pull that only brought it to a more charming disarray. "I hate the color of it. Why, when I was a child I never could bear to have the heroines of the fairy tales have a shining head of golden hair, and I used to think mine was gold, and one day when I said so and was told, 'No, your hair is red, not gold,' I cried for days afterward."

"You poor little thing!" he said, his face as full of sympathy as if those tears had just been shed. And for the life of her the secretary couldn't help her lip trembling, though she knew it was absurd and was very much ashamed of herself. Vincent broke the silence first. "We might do a little on the 'Dead Barons of Wyckhoff,'" he suggested. It was evident that our affair of last night was uppermost in his mind, for his air was very abstracted.

"No, thank you, my lord. This is my evening off. I am no longer Miss Marsh, the secretary, but Miss Marsh the lady of leisure."

"I didn't think of it as work, and I thought perhaps you didn't, either when we did it together."

"Little boys shouldn't think; it's a bad habit," she said, severely; "besides, you talk like 'I' in the 'Dolly Dialogues.'"

At this Vincent's face grew desperate, and I saw that she had goaded him into asking her the question that had been on his mind all day, and I nearly fell off the sofa in my efforts to hear without being seen.

"Do I?" he said. "Well, that's because I've something I've been wanting to ask you all day long. It's something very personal, and, of course, I've no right—that is, you won't think so," the boy was stumbling pitifully, "but I've got to know; it's so hard to believe that you would do it deliberately. Is it true?"

"Lord Wilfred," said the girl, straightening up, "you must speak more clearly if you want me to understand what you have been saying."

"It's this," said Lord Wilfred, facing her abruptly and terribly in earnest, "Someone told me last night that you were a married woman. Is it true?"

I could not see the face of the secretary, but I could not help perceiving the ring of truth in her voice.

"I'm not married," she said, simply. "I told Mr. Terhune so because I wanted to disabuse him of a false impression he was laboring under. But what is it to you?"

"This," said Wilfred, and he leaned toward her suddenly and grasped her hands and put his face within an inch of her—I could see by the firelight its look of determination and ineffable relief. The secretary gave a little cry and drew back. I conjectured that Wilfred was on the point of making an irretrievable ass of himself, so I interrupted proceedings by knocking a book off the sofa and rising to my feet. At the first sound of the book falling the two had jumped to their feet and stood, the girl shrinking close to Wilfred and Wilfred with his arm thrown around her.

"Who goes there?" he said, sternly, as he discovered my figure in the gloom, and "Ah!—it's you, Terhune," as I came into the circle of light, in a tone I hope I may never hear from him again.

As the secretary saw who it was she sprang away and was gone from the room in a second.

"Well," he said, with a sneer, as the curtains closed behind her, "eavesdropper, meddling as usual. What can I do for you?"

I sat down on the stool. "Sit down," I said, with quiet authority, "and we'll talk it over." He sat down. In moments like this he forgets his independence and remembers that at one time he used to obey me habitually. I wanted to comfort him, but I knew my duty better. "Vincent," I said, appealingly, "don't you see it won't do? She's no match for you—a girl with no family and no money, and of her station in life. Give it up, I implore you. Think of your father. There has never been a mesalliance in the family; it would break his heart."

Vincent raised his head. "Mrs. Armistead says her family is perfectly respectable," he said. "I asked her."

"Perfectly respectable!" I repeated, contemptuously. "Think of a Vincent marrying a girl who has nothing in her favor but the fact that her family was 'perfectly respectable!'"

Vincent sighed pathetically and I delivered one more blow. "Think," I said; "your brother Edmund is over 40, unmarried, and a sufferer from rheumatism of the heart, as you know. Suppose he should die—wouldn't you make a more creditable heir to the title if you hadn't tied yourself up to a wife of obscure origin—a penniless American girl? And if you don't come into the title you're only a younger son, and you know yourself your propensity for getting into debt, and the foreign office for a boy of your age is not a paying business. No, Vincent, you're not cut out for making money, and it's certain you can't depend on your father forever. Can't you see how rash and foolish you are to consider such a thing?"

I leaned over and put my hand on Vincent's shoulder. He turned his head, and when I felt his smooth cheek against my hand I knew that the battle was won.

"I'm awfully sorry, Arch," he said, "that I was such a beast last night. I'll never forgive myself for trying to strike you. Only, you see, I lost my head, and I didn't know quite what I was doing." "Of course," I said, "I understand—" But he would not let me stem the tide of his remorse. "And then, you know, what you said was very hard to bear, and you see, after all, it wasn't true. She told me it wasn't. Did you hear her?"

"Yes," I assented, "and I believe she told you the truth."

"Of course; but then you're always right, Archibald, always right. When I go away from here and never see her any more"—his lips quivered uncontrollably—"I may be able to forget her."

"Of course you will," I assured him, cheerily, though there was a lump in my throat. "Men have died, but not for love. Many have been as hard hit as you and have recovered."

"Oh, yes," agreed my patient, but without enthusiasm; but at any rate I had gained my point, and Vincent had agreed with me that marriage with the secretary was too rash and foolish for him to contemplate.

"By-the-by, Arch," he said, carelessly, as we still sat before the fire trying to make believe that the incident of the secretary was closed, "I have something to tell you. The secretary told me outright which one of the six girls really is the daughter of Fletcher Boyd."

I looked at him in utter astonishment. "What!" I said, excitedly; "do you mean to say she deliberately gave away the secret? Which one is it, for Heaven's sake? And why did she do it?"

"It's Agatha Sixth. You were right all along. As for the reason, I don't know what she did it for, unless—unless—" he hesitated. "She's such an honorable little thing I think she felt that the marriage would displease my family, so she wanted to turn me from what she saw was coming and used the disclosure of the Honorable Agatha's identity for bait. Come on to bed," he added, with a little return of his old spirit; "you'd better get rested for your last try for the twenty millions. If you make up for past neglect you ought to win Agatha Sixth hands down."

"Then you don't mean to try?"

His face clouded again. "I don't mean to try," he said, and we went up to our rooms in silence.

And so we came to the last four days of our stay at Castle Wyckhoff, and I began subtly and by degrees to win back my former place in the regard of Agatha Sixth, and with every inch of ground I gained in my pursuit of the Honorable Agatha I thought of Vincent with a fresh pity.

The evening before the last day of our stay we all spent together in the music room. We were very jolly, and yet underneath it all I think the girls were a little saddened by our approaching departure, and Wilfred and I felt a certain regret that the end of our delightful visit had come, though of course I had fully determined to propose to Agatha Sixth on the morrow. I was rather surprised, therefore, when Vincent suddenly complained of headache and, excusing himself, went up to his room. When I went up to my own room I rapped on his door, but he made no answer and I concluded that he must be asleep. The next morning, much to my astonishment, he did not saunter in and out of my room as he was accustomed to do of a morning, but as it was late I did not stop to investigate. But when ten o'clock came, and still no Vincent, I went up to his room, for I thought he should be up and doing on this, his last day at Castle Wyckhoff, when he was to leave for London on the 4:15 train that afternoon. I say "he" not "we," for I felt more confident of my success with Agatha Sixth that day than I had done the evening before, and although I had not yet had the opportunity to put the great question, I felt that it was very possible that in the guise of accepted lover I might not have to take the 4:15 that afternoon.

When I reached Vincent's room I knocked twice, and, receiving no answer, entered, and was somewhat alarmed to find that he was not there, though his bed had been slept in. Anxious, without knowing why, I tore downstairs and called for Mrs. Armistead. That good lady met me at the foot of the stairs in answer to my summons, with an air as anxious as my own.

"Have you see Lord Vincent?" asked her.

"Have you seen my secretary?" she replied, without answering my question. "She's not in her room, though her bed has been slept in. But she hasn't had her breakfast, and I can't find her anywhere."

"You don't mean it!" I ejaculated, and a sickening fear turned me cold.

"Perhaps this has something to do with it," said Mrs. Armistead. "I found it on the front hall table underneath the mail bag."

Her anxiety was apparently sincere, and yet somehow it rang false to me. With impatient fingers I seized the folded paper she drew from her reticule. It read as follows:

"Dear Old Arch: Sorry to deceive you so, but I've gone and done it—that rash, foolish thing you told me not to do; at least, by the time you get this note the deed will be done. And I so dreaded your reproaches that I never so much as asked you to be the best man. But I couldn't help it, Arch, honest I couldn't. Not to save my soul. She shouldn't have had eyes like stars and hair like autumn leaves. As for the money, hang the stuffy old millions, I say! Every pound of it is so many glass beads to me in comparison to what I have this day gained. I wish you joy of them and of the Honorable Agatha. Dear old boy, forgive me if you can; and if you want to do me one last favor come down to the station in time to meet the eleven-seventeen for London and hear my last injunctions. VINCENT."

"When did you find this?" I gasped. But I didn't wait to hear her reply, for a glance at the hall clock told me that it was five minutes of eleven. Bareheaded I rushed around to the stables and fortunately found Christopher just putting the mare into the dogcart. "Get in," I yelled, "and drive like sin!"

"Sin, sir? Where, sir?" asked Christopher.

"The station!" I cried, jumping up beside him; and we flew down the winding drive at a pace that I would not think of attempting in cold blood.

Through Mrs. Armistead's criminal delay in handing me the note many valuable minutes had been wasted, yet I thought I should still be in time perhaps to save Vincent from carrying out the last fatal step of his incredible folly. It might not be too late to part them, for in spite of what he had said in his note I could not believe that the worst had actually happened. As we approached the last strip of woods before we reached the station I caught sight of a puff of white smoke down the track. A moment later, when we drew up at the platform, the great locomotive thundered into the station, and there, at the other end of the platform, I saw them. There was Vincent, clad in the things he had worn on the train when we had first come through the fields to Wye, and with him was a remarkably pretty girl with beautiful wavy red hair, in a gray tailor suit and a smart black hat. Of course it was the secretary.

I waved at them frantically and they waved in return, and I could see Vincent smiling happily at me as they entered one of the carriages. As I came up with their carriage Vincent opened the window wide and thrust his head out. "Oh, Vincent!" was all I said; "am I too late?"

"Not at all," he said, genially; "you're just in time to congratulate me. But what I wanted of you, Arch"—and he leaned toward me and lowered his voice—"was to ask you to break it to my father."

"Then it's true?" I said, not quite able to believe it, even yet.

"Yes, it's true," he said aloud, and with a radiant smile he drew back a little so that I could see the erstwhile Miss Marsh. "It's true that I've married the secretary."

"But it's not," said that lady, much to my surprise, and thrusting out her pretty head. "It's not true a bit. He hasn't married the secretary at all. I was only 'playing' secretary. He's married no one but the Honorable Agatha, the first, last, and only honorable!"

And for proof of her astonishing words she snatched off her glove and displayed to my marveling gaze the big emerald cross of the Wyckhoff ring, winking in the sunshine.

At this moment the train began to move, and I was filled with a sudden and justifiable rage that Vincent should have so deceived me. To think that he had been in the secret all the time and had helped to make a fool of me! But one look at his face proved to me that I had done him an injustice. He was as stricken with amazement as I was, and I knew that then, and not until then, had he become acquainted with the truth. Gathering my wits quickly, for the train was moving faster I ran after their carriage till I caught up with the window again. "Good-by!" I shouted, and "God bless you!" And Vincent, reaching out his big hand, had just time to catch mine in his strong grasp before I dropped back, outstripped, and he had withdrawn his radiant face from my view.

Afterward I learned many things. First, that they had been married very early that morning, before the rest of us were up, in the little chapel at Wye, with Mrs. Armistead, who was in the secret, as witness. That explained her delay in giving me the note. Dreading my interference, they had not wished me to know until the whole thing was well over and Mrs. Armistead back at Castle Wyckhoff. Second, that it had been the Honorable Agatha's own idea to play the part of secretary to her aunt, thus improving upon her father's plan, and making it still more difficult for the competing suitors to discover her identity. Third, that her reason for telling Vincent that Agatha Sixth was the real Honorable Agatha was only to prove him once more and to the uttermost. And Vincent had stood the trial without faltering and had even proved himself equal to disregarding my wishes. Yet I really think that on that night when he had agreed with me that it was best to give her up he meant to do so, but his love for the girl proved stronger than his love for gold or his feeling for his friend. And it was thus that the boy won—because he had loved truly and faithfully.

And I also learned afterward that the six Agathas, shortly after the elopement of Vincent and the secretary-that-was, had all gone to their homes in America. Later some of them married certain suitors who had once been guests at Castle Wyckhoff. Among these were Agatha First and young Brancepeth, who, I am happy to say, has led a reformed life since his marriage. And it also came to pass that Vincent and his bride took possession of Castle Wyckhoff as their country seat when they came back from their honeymoon. And there I often visited them.

But on that eventful day when the train had pulled out of the station none of these things was known to me, and I stood on the platform dizzy with the unexpected turn events had taken.

And so it was that Vincent got ahead of me, just as he has always done. And so it was, also, that I returned to London, still an eligible bachelor, still the prey of match-making mammas and smiling debutantes.

There was but one comforting thought in the mixture of disappointment and chagrin that made the sum of my feelings as I drove slowly back to the castle. This much had been given me: At least I had not made the fatal mistake of proposing to the wrong Agatha, and I hugged myself as I thought how near I had come to putting the question to Agatha Sixth that very morning. That, at least, I had managed to avoid. From that folly the innate caution and unerring instinct of Archibald Terhune had preserved him. Thank Heaven!

THE END.